
SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Glossy Ibis at Crabtree Nature Center

The morning of 6 May 1993 while I was working at the Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington, Cook County, David Habisohn walked in and told me he had seen a Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) in the beaver pond on the property. I jumped into my car to confirm the sighting.

I drove to the 25+acre pond in the midst of the 1500-acre Cook County Forest Preserve which contains hardwood reforestation, grassland plantings, and wetlands.

On this bright sunny day I could clearly see the distinct face pattern that separates Glossy Ibis from White-faced Ibis.

This bird, in adult breeding plumage, was about the size of a Mallard Duck but much larger than a Blue-winged Teal, both nearby. Its body was all dark and it had long, grayish legs and a long, grayish, decurved bill. The crown feathers, back, scapulars, and wing coverts were black with a blue-green iridescence. The breast, belly, and short tail were dark. The head, neck, and shoulders showed a rich rusty brown with a slight iridescence.

I could not detect any white at the base of the bird's bill; however, other observers later in the day using a Questar scope were able to discern a very narrow whitish band (with some blue tint) at the base of the bill as opposed to the heavy white mark which would be seen circling the red eye on a White-faced Ibis.

For the next 48 hours, many visitors came to see the Glossy Ibis including Richard Biss who operates the Chicago Audubon Society Rare Bird Hotline, Ken Wilz, Amy Bergman, Robert Montgomery, Ted Dillon, Laurence Binford, and Dave Johnson.

The bird was last seen at 1:15 p.m. 7 May 1993.

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Glossy Ibis in Pulaski County

Knowing the birding potential of the Ducks Unlimited tract of the newly formed Cypress Creek

N.W.R. for wading birds, Judy DeNeal, Bob Lindsay, John Andrews, and I spent a good part of 8 May 1993 sloshing through the shallow impoundments in what was once farmland adjacent to the Cache River.

After having filled my rubber boots with water, which gave new meaning to the term aqua socks, I decided to really take the plunge and wade through thigh-deep water to see what was on the other side of the levee. There I saw Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and two, relatively small, chestnut-colored waders. I immediately recognized them as ibises by their general shape and long decurved bills. After nearly swimming back to the car to inform DeNeal and Andrews (Lindsay had already departed) of the ibises, we approached the birds by a levee to the south where we could get better lighting on the birds and approach them within 100 yards.

Small birds were foraging in a shallow, moist soil unit with standing persistent hydric plants (*Polygonum sp.*, *Juncus sp.*, and *Rumex crispus*) at the edge of the water. They were bent over foraging by raking their bills through water and mud.

The birds were about the size of adjacent Little Blue Herons, with chestnut bodies and iridescent blackish green wings, and long, decurved, brownish-gray bills, which were lighter distally. Both birds had light-blue facial skin that was interrupted behind the eye. The facial skin was most evident frontally, where it formed a shallow "V". Leg color was yellowish-brown. These field marks were consistent with Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*).

Clued by the flight of other herons, they flew in wide circles, with alternating shallow wing beats and soaring. They eventually landed in an adjacent impoundment with dense vegetation. We attempted to relocate the ibises in the vegetation, but never found them. Following days' searches by other observers were also unsuccessful.

Less than a dozen spring records and about seven fall records exist for Glossy Ibis in the state according to Bohlen (1989, *The Birds of Illinois*). Care should be taken when identifying the dark ibises, especially in the fall when the color of the bare parts may not be evident. For a summary of field marks separating the White-faced Ibis from the Glossy Ibis, refer to an article written by H. Douglas Pratt (*Birding*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Jan-Feb. 1976).

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